
Opportunities and Challenges of the Merdeka Curriculum in the Islamic Religious Education Subject at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra, East Lombok

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Abstract: Education in Indonesia is undergoing significant transformation in tandem with technological advancements, with the Merdeka Curriculum emerging as a response to the demands of the modern era, particularly in the context of Industry 4.0. This curriculum introduces flexibility and innovation in learning approaches but also encounters challenges such as resource limitations and the necessity for teacher training. At SMA Negeri 1 Sakra in East Lombok, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum since the 2022/2023 academic year has presented opportunities for more varied and inclusive teaching methods, particularly in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), while also confronting challenges in balancing theological and practical aspects. This research aims to explore the opportunities and challenges of the Merdeka Curriculum within the Islamic Religious Education subject at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra, East Lombok Regency. Utilizing a qualitative approach with a descriptive naturalistic method, the study focuses on direct observation and a holistic understanding of the phenomena at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra, East Lombok. Data collection is conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation, employing interactive analysis based on the Miles and Huberman model to examine the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The findings of this study reveal that the opportunities perceived by SMA Negeri 1 Sakra, East Lombok, after implementing the Merdeka Curriculum include enhanced enthusiasm among educators to develop their capacities, increased student engagement and activity in the classroom, and the school's ability to cultivate a learning ecosystem that is more student-centered. However, the school also faces challenges, such as the need to shift the mindset of both teachers and students, the task of harmonizing diverse Islamic values among students and teachers, the difficulty of creating enjoyable and high-quality learning experiences, and the issue of resource constraints.

Keywords: Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, Islamic Religious Education

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia is undergoing rapid development in line with advancements in technology and changing times (Sudarmo et al., 2021). The curriculum, as a key component of the education system, is also evolving to align with scientific progress and societal needs (Stuckey et al., 2013). In this context, the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum) has emerged as a reform effort aimed at adapting the learning process to the challenges of the times, particularly in the face of the Industry 4.0 era characterized by advancements in digital technology and shifts in societal thinking (Nadiya et al., 2024). The Industry 4.0 revolution has a significant impact on perspectives towards

education and the role of educators (Oke & Fernandes, 2020). With key features such as artificial intelligence, big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT), this era drives profound changes in social interaction patterns and learning processes. The Kurikulum Merdeka was developed in response to the need to prepare students to adapt to these changes, emphasizing flexibility, innovation, and student empowerment in the learning process (Simarmata & Mayuni, 2023).

SMA Negeri 1 Sakra East Lombok, East Lombok Regency, the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka began in the 2022/2023 academic year. The Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) concept underlying this curriculum provides students with the freedom to explore and optimize their potential, as well as offering

teachers the space to innovate in teaching methods. However, this implementation also faces various challenges that need to be identified and addressed to ensure its effectiveness. Opportunities offered by the Kurikulum Merdeka include the potential for teachers to adopt more varied, project-based, and contextual teaching methods, as well as integrating character education. Challenges include resource limitations, consistency in implementation, and the need for adequate teacher training.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the Kurikulum Merdeka offers the potential to develop more inclusive and relevant learning, but also faces specific challenges related to balancing theological and practical aspects of the curriculum. Therefore, this study aims to explore the opportunities and challenges in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in Islamic Religious Education at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra, East Lombok Regency, with the hope of contributing to the improvement and development of the curriculum in the future. This study provides novelty by examining how the Kurikulum Merdeka is implemented in the local context of SMA Negeri 1 Sakra East Lombok, specifically in Islamic Religious Education. The main focus is on innovations in teaching methods that combine contextual approaches, such as project-based learning and integration with other disciplines. The study also explores how the Kurikulum Merdeka addresses specific challenges in religious teaching by adapting teaching materials to local needs and student characteristics, offering new insights into curriculum adaptation in different contexts compared to implementations in other regions.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive naturalistic method, prioritizing natural field observations. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research is conducted according to field conditions and focuses on meaning rather than quantitative data (Lexy, 2002). Moleong adds that qualitative research aims to understand phenomena holistically through word descriptions in natural contexts (Moleong, 2019). As Nasution explains, this research is naturalistic because it is not manipulated or controlled through experiments (Nasution, 2023). This study uses a descriptive method to explore social, cultural,

and human behavioral phenomena in depth, focusing on depicting existing conditions without generalization.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Xu & Storr, 2012). The researcher is directly involved with participants through observation, interviews, and documentation, and must consider personal bias in data analysis. The researcher will use an interactive analysis method, including data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and data verification according to the Miles and Huberman analysis model. This process ensures that the collected data is relevant and in-depth, allowing the researcher to gain comprehensive insights into the studied phenomena.

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur, chosen due to the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum at the school. The selection of this location is based on its uniqueness and relevance to the research topic. Primary data sources include the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, Islamic Education teachers, and students. Secondary data includes related documents such as school profiles, curricula, and activity reports. Data collection procedures involve direct observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and documentation to ensure that the collected data is valid and accurate.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Opportunities for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education Subjects

To embrace national change and progress, one of the steps that can be taken is to reconstruct the education system by aligning it with the times, through education that liberates and humanizes individuals. In the Merdeka Belajar concept, teachers and students collaborate in the learning process, where the teacher is not an absolute source of truth but a facilitator who helps students explore truth and develop their critical thinking skills. By leveraging advancements in technology and the internet, education can inspire innovation, independence, and creativity for both teachers and students (Azmi & Iswanto, 2021). Merdeka Belajar also provides students the opportunity to shape their future without the pressure and stress

caused by national exams, thereby boosting their self-confidence (Situmorang, 2023).

Regarding the positive impacts or opportunities experienced from implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur, interviews were conducted with the school principal, vice principal, and several teachers as informants. From the interviews conducted by the researcher, the conclusions shared by the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur include:

- a) The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur opens up significant opportunities. First, the Merdeka Curriculum allows the school to build a learning ecosystem that better supports students. By focusing on individual needs and providing flexibility in teaching methods, the school can create a more inclusive and student-centered learning environment.
- b) The Merdeka Curriculum also provides opportunities for teachers to collaborate and exchange experiences. By considering the unique characteristics of each student, teachers can work together to create more effective and relevant learning strategies. This fosters a collaborative culture among teaching staff, which in turn enhances the overall quality of teaching.
- c) The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum gives educational institutions the chance to develop and compete more effectively. By focusing on innovation and adapting to local needs, schools can enhance their competitiveness in delivering quality education. This also opens the door for developing educational programs that are more suited to the local social, cultural, and economic context.
- d) Overall, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur not only expands opportunities for individual student development but also strengthens teacher collaboration and enhances the school's competitiveness in providing relevant and high-quality education.

Here is a quote from an interview with the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur, Mr. Muhammad Subandi:

"Discussing the opportunities experienced after implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur, this

implementation has become a primary opportunity, where the school can build a learning ecosystem that is more student-centered. Second, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum presents opportunities for teachers to collaborate and create learning processes that consider students' characteristics. Third, the Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for educational institutions."

After implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, one positive impact observed is the greater flexibility in developing learning materials. This curriculum allows teachers more freedom to design and adjust the curriculum according to the needs and characteristics of their students. This flexibility enables teachers to integrate religious values and Islamic Education (PAI) content more creatively and relevantly with the students' context. In this way, the learning materials not only teach religious concepts theoretically but also relate them to real-life situations faced by students daily.

Flexibility in developing materials also allows teachers to adjust teaching approaches to individual students' learning styles. Teachers can use various methods and approaches that suit each student's learning preferences and needs, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the learning process. This improves the quality of religious education and PAI, as well as students' engagement and understanding of the material.

Mr. Mahjur, an Islamic Education teacher, mentioned:

"The opportunities or positive impacts experienced after implementing the Merdeka Curriculum are the flexibility in developing materials. The Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility in material development, allowing us as teachers to integrate religious values and PAI content more creatively and relevantly to the students' context."

Mr. Zainul Islam, also an Islamic Education teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur, said:

"The opportunity that arises after implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is the emphasis on understanding religious values: with a holistic learning approach, the Merdeka Curriculum allows for a stronger emphasis on understanding religious values, ethics, and morality in the context of daily life."

Additionally, a stronger emphasis on religious values, ethics, and morality helps students develop attitudes and behaviors

consistent with their religious teachings. Teachers can use various teaching methods that emphasize reflection, discussion, and practical application of religious values in daily life. This allows students to better internalize these values, strengthen their understanding, and apply attitudes and behaviors consistent with religious teachings in their daily lives. Mr. Bukran, another PAI teacher, also emphasized:

"Character Development: PAI can be an effective means of character development in students, such as tolerance, honesty, and empathy, which aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum's goal of creating a well-rounded generation."

Islamic Education (PAI) has significant potential as an effective means of character development, including attitudes of tolerance, honesty, and empathy, which align with the Merdeka Curriculum's goal of creating a well-rounded generation. First, in PAI learning, students are exposed to Islamic values encompassing principles of loyalty, honesty, and integrity. Teachers can use stories, real-life examples, or group discussions to illustrate the importance of these attitudes in Islamic teachings. Thus, students not only understand these values theoretically but are also given the opportunity to reflect on and internalize them in their daily lives.

Second, PAI learning can also be a platform for promoting attitudes of tolerance and empathy among students. Within the Merdeka Curriculum context, students can be encouraged to understand and appreciate cultural, religious, and social background differences, and to learn to empathize with others. Discussions on diversity can help students develop better attitudes of tolerance and empathy.

Third, PAI can contribute to creating a positive and inclusive learning environment by instilling good character values. By integrating the teaching of religious values into daily learning activities, schools can build a more harmonious and supportive community, thus helping students develop character consistent with their religious teachings. This is also reflected in the impacts observed from the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, including:

1. Increased creativity among students and teachers

One positive impact observed is an increase in creativity among students and teachers. With

the flexibility provided by the Merdeka Curriculum, both teachers and students have more freedom in designing and implementing learning that matches their interests and needs. This increased creativity contributes to a more dynamic and innovative learning atmosphere.

2. Increased educator capacity

Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum requires educators to continuously enhance their capacity to create quality learning. This motivates educators to keep learning and adapting to changes, as well as to find new ways to improve their teaching effectiveness.

3. Development of student competencies

The Merdeka Curriculum provides space for students to develop their competencies more broadly. With the freedom to design learning, students can explore their interests and talents, and develop skills relevant to their future needs.

4. Increased motivation and engagement of students

The flexibility in learning provided by the Merdeka Curriculum also impacts increased motivation and engagement among students. Students feel more involved in the learning process when they have the freedom to choose topics or methods that align with their interests.

Overall, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur has provided various positive impacts, including increased creativity among students and teachers, enhanced educator capacity, development of student competencies, and increased motivation and engagement of students in the learning process.

Challenges for Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education Subjects

Alongside the opportunities and positive impacts, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum faces challenges, particularly concerning changes in mindset. These challenges require shifts from school leaders, teaching staff, students, and parents. School leaders and teachers must adapt to a more flexible, student-centered approach rather than the traditional model. Teachers also need to transition from being information deliverers to facilitators who guide students in self-directed learning.

Students must adopt an open mindset towards self-directed and project-based learning,

moving away from passive roles. Parents need to support this new approach and encourage their children to actively participate in the learning process. If these mindset changes do not occur, implementing the Merdeka Curriculum may face significant obstacles. Therefore, effective education and communication about the values and benefits of the new learning approach are crucial to overcoming these challenges and achieving success in applying the Merdeka Curriculum.

At SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur, several challenges have emerged in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. According to the principal, Mr. Muhammad Subandi:

“Discussing the challenges of the Merdeka Curriculum, it is indeed something new, and there are bound to be challenges. The primary challenge is related to the need for a mindset change, which involves school leaders, teachers, administrative staff, students, and even parents.”

A student from the 11th grade at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur, Mila Irmaesa, expressed her challenges after implementing the Merdeka Curriculum:

“In my opinion, the challenges I encountered with the Merdeka Curriculum include the readiness of teachers to drive change in the classroom. Previously, with the K-13 curriculum, my workload and class schedule were not as intense. However, with the Merdeka Curriculum, I have stepped out of my comfort zone; assignments have become denser, which makes me more active and less lazy than before. Projects, videos, and other tasks have been surprising. Additionally, there are challenges related to facilities such as phones, data quotas, and others.”

Mr. Anwar Syuhudi, the Deputy Principal for Curriculum, also commented on the challenges:

“The challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum are varied. The main challenge in this school is the change in mindset, both for teachers and students. The role of educators has shifted from using a uniform approach to fostering students as lifelong independent learners. Therefore, educators are required to actively become mentors, facilitators, or coaches in project-based learning.”

The primary challenge in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is the change in mindset for both teachers and students. Teachers must

shift from being information deliverers to facilitators who support students' independence and creativity. Meanwhile, students need to be active in their learning and develop self-directed learning skills. In addition to changing mindsets, other challenges include curriculum adjustments and teacher professional development. Addressing these challenges is essential for the success of the Merdeka Curriculum, which aims to produce independent and future-ready students.

The implementation of a new curriculum often encounters obstacles, including in Islamic Education. As Mr. Bukran, an Islamic Education teacher, noted:

“The challenge is the diversity of understanding. The Merdeka Curriculum faces the challenge of aligning the diverse understandings of Islamic values among students and teachers. This requires an inclusive approach that respects various beliefs. Another challenge is the potential for misconceptions. The Merdeka Curriculum must address potential misconceptions or incorrect interpretations of religious teachings, necessitating effective teaching strategies to ensure correct and comprehensive understanding.”

Challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, especially related to Islamic values, involve understanding differences and religious diversity. To address this, an inclusive approach must be applied, ensuring all students feel recognized regardless of their religious background. Teachers need to create a learning environment that supports open dialogue and considers diversity in the learning materials. Additionally, teaching strategies should be designed to identify and correct misconceptions through discussion and reflection. Providing diverse learning resources and involving religious figures can deepen understanding. With this approach, the Merdeka Curriculum can overcome challenges and create an inclusive and meaningful learning environment.

Another challenge faced in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education, as mentioned by Mr. Zainul Islam, is:

“The difficulty for educators in improvising enjoyable and high-quality learning experiences for students. Creating enjoyable learning experiences with the Merdeka Curriculum requires ongoing improvisation. I believe that enjoyable learning should be

continuous, not just occasional. An educator plays a crucial role in creating learning that is both enjoyable and effective. In this regard, Islamic Education teachers still find it challenging to improvise Islamic Education lessons as expected. This is influenced by the limitations of educators and the lack of references for Islamic Education teachers related to engaging teaching methods.”

Difficulty in improvising enjoyable and high-quality learning experiences is a real challenge for educators in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. Effective learning must be sustainable and maintain student interest. In Islamic Education (PAI), teachers often face challenges in creating expected learning experiences due to limited access to adequate resources. To address this, PAI educators need to seek additional references, utilize literature and the internet, and engage with the teaching community to exchange ideas. Training and workshops on innovative methods can also enhance teachers' improvisation skills.

School leaders and relevant parties can support PAI teachers by providing relevant resources, supporting professional development, and appreciating their efforts. This support helps teachers overcome difficulties in improvising lessons, creating engaging and meaningful experiences, and achieving the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum to produce well-rounded and competent students.

As noted by Ms. Baiq Nurtira Yuniati, the Deputy Principal for Student Affairs:

“Resource and teaching staff limitations are among the challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education may also be hampered by limitations such as supporting textbooks, laboratory facilities, and the lack of training for teachers and educational staff.”

Based on several interviews, the challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur include:

1. Resource Limitations

Many schools, especially in rural areas or economically disadvantaged regions, face limitations in physical resources such as textbooks, technology devices, and adequate learning facilities. Without adequate resources, educators may struggle to provide

rich and varied learning experiences according to the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

2. Teaching Staff Limitations

A shortage of qualified teachers or an insufficient number of teachers can hinder the delivery of effective and high-quality learning. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes interactive and project-based learning, a lack of teachers can be a significant barrier.

3. Professional Development and Training

Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum requires skilled and trained educators in new learning approaches. However, training and professional development for educators are often insufficient. Without adequate training, teachers may struggle to implement innovative and engaging learning methods proposed by the Merdeka Curriculum.

4. Digital Divide

In an era where technology is increasingly integral to learning, the digital divide between schools with access to technology and those without can be a challenge. Schools with limited access to technology and the internet may struggle to integrate technology into learning, hindering the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on diverse teaching tools.

To address these challenges, a commitment from the government, educational institutions, and communities is needed to improve access to educational resources, strengthen professional development for educators, and reduce the digital divide among schools. With collective efforts, it is hoped that the Merdeka Curriculum can be implemented more effectively and equitably across various regions.

Discussion Opportunities

Essentially, the curriculum is the forefront of educational advancement and the key to success in the educational world in Indonesia (Shaturaev, 2021). "Freedom to choose" and "freedom to process" are at the heart of the Merdeka Learning Curriculum, which is expected to bring a fresh spirit for change towards better conditions. The educational process fundamentally frees students from all forms of pressure, threats, and exploitation (Rhoads & Mina, 2001).

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum offers significant opportunities for SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur to build a learning ecosystem that is more student-centered. This curriculum opens up opportunities for teachers to collaborate in creating learning processes that consider the characteristics of each student and provides educational institutions the freedom to offer learning services tailored to their students' unique traits. With an emphasis on increasing the creativity of both students and teachers, the Merdeka Curriculum allows for the exploration of engaging themes and the use of various teaching tools. It also enhances student enthusiasm and participation in class, encouraging them to think critically, communicate, collaborate, and be active in learning activities. This curriculum focuses on developing students' potential through inclusive and creative approaches, as well as improving the quality of Islamic education by integrating religious values into learning materials and character development (Zidan & Qamariah, 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum presents significant opportunities for Islamic Education (Sa'diyah & Yunizul, 2024), offering impacts such as:

1. Inclusivity

The Merdeka Curriculum allows for the development of an inclusive curriculum that encompasses various perspectives and religious understandings, respecting differences and enriching students' religious comprehension.

2. Contextualization

Islamic education can better integrate the social, cultural, and historical context of the community where the education takes place, allowing students to understand religion in the context of their daily lives.

3. Relevance

The Merdeka Curriculum enables the development of a curriculum responsive to changing times and students' needs, focusing on current issues faced by the Muslim community, such as technology, economics, the environment, and other social challenges.

4. Student Empowerment

The Merdeka Curriculum encourages students to actively engage in their religious learning, think critically, discuss, and conduct independent research on relevant religious

topics, thereby developing a deeper understanding and critical thinking skills.

The Merdeka Curriculum can enhance educators' motivation to develop their own capacities. With the various demands of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, educators must not only master the subject matter, strategies, methods, media, and teaching tools but also create quality learning experiences and conducive learning environments that meet students' needs. Therefore, educators need to enhance their own capacities to ensure that Islamic Education runs smoothly and achieves its desired goals.

Challenges

The Merdeka Curriculum requires a broader and more diverse range of resources, such as digital technology and other materials. However, some schools may lack adequate support for effective implementation. Additionally, the curriculum demands adaptation to students' characteristics, including their interests and talents, which can be challenging when integrating the Merdeka Curriculum with Islamic Education (PAI) materials. Variations in student characteristics can complicate the process of aligning the curriculum with individual needs.

At SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur, while the Merdeka Curriculum offers opportunities, it also faces several challenges. These include the need for a mindset shift at all levels—principals, teachers, administrative staff, students, and parents. Teacher readiness, particularly in implementing Project-Based Learning (PBL), is also a concern. PAI teachers face difficulties understanding how to apply the Merdeka Curriculum, which can reduce the effectiveness of integrating it with PAI materials. Other obstacles include differing interpretations of Islamic values and potential misconceptions, requiring inclusive and precise teaching strategies to ensure accurate and comprehensive understanding (RAHMATIKA et al., 2024).

Challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education include difficulties in creating engaging and high-quality learning experiences. Effective and engaging learning must be continuous, not sporadic. PAI teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur still face constraints in improvising their teaching materials, affected by limited references and resources. Moreover, resource limitations, such as textbooks, media, and laboratory facilities,

hinder the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The success of overcoming these challenges depends on factors such as the commitment of school leaders, the availability of resources, the qualifications of teaching staff, and the involvement of the entire school community.

To improve their ability to address the challenges of the Merdeka Curriculum, SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur can consider the following steps:

1. Developing a School Improvement Plan

The school can create a specific development plan to address the challenges of the Merdeka Curriculum. This plan should include concrete steps to improve the quality of learning, expand access to resources, and enhance the involvement of teachers, students, and parents.

2. Training and Professional Development

The school can organize regular training and workshops to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Training can cover innovative teaching strategies, the use of technology in education, and inclusive approaches to student diversity.

3. Developing a Local Curriculum

The school can develop a local curriculum that aligns with the local context and student needs while adhering to national guidelines. A relevant and diverse curriculum will help the school better meet the individual learning needs of students.

4. Collaboration with External Partners

The school can establish partnerships with external organizations, including NGOs, higher education institutions, and local businesses, to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Collaboration can include providing additional resources, mentoring programs for teachers, or support for extracurricular activities.

5. Encouraging Parental and Community Involvement

The school can promote active participation from parents and the community in the educational process. Involving parents in school decision-making and organizing community programs can enhance support for the Merdeka Curriculum and improve the quality of learning.

By taking these ongoing steps, SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur and other schools in Lombok Timur can improve their ability to

address the challenges of the Merdeka Curriculum and deliver quality education. Developing a local curriculum for Islamic Education that reflects local values and contexts, along with regular teacher training on Merdeka Curriculum principles, is key. Schools can also leverage technology and conduct continuous evaluations to enrich students' learning experiences. With an integrated strategy, schools can overcome challenges and provide relevant and effective education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussions related to the opportunities and challenges of the Merdeka Curriculum in Islamic Education (PAI) at SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur, Lombok Timur, this study demonstrates that the opportunities perceived by SMA Negeri 1 Sakra Lombok Timur after implementing the Merdeka Curriculum include increased enthusiasm among educators in developing their capacities, heightened enthusiasm and engagement of students in the classroom, and the ability of the school to build a learning ecosystem more supportive of students. The challenges faced include shifting the mindset of both teachers and students, adjusting to the diverse understandings of Islamic values among students and teachers, difficulties in creating enjoyable and high-quality learning experiences, and limitations in resources.

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